Decolonization

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In history and the social sciences, distinctions are often drawn between empire (a political and economic structure); imperialism (the practice of creating such structures, as well as ideological and cultural justifications for them); colonization (the actual settlement and peopling of territories); and colonialism (advocating and supporting such settlement). Decolonization, however, is a roomy concept that encompasses actions and processes that counteract, reverse, or terminate all of these phenomena.

Formal "flag independence" – the achievement of sovereign nation-statehood by a previously colonized territory – is the most common understanding of what decolonization entails. Politics at the center of an empire (which we will call the "core" or "metropole") and in the territory being ruled (the "periphery" or "colony") are often seen as the main *causes* of imperial decline and decolonization. Whilst decisions taken by the rulers of an empire are clearly important, the actions of what we will refer to as "anti-colonial nationalists" are also of great significance. So too was the international context within which both imperial powers and nationalists tried to claim support for their actions. The varied economic, social, and cultural processes that led empires to be replaced by nation-states render the field highly complex.

But changes in the formal political arrangements of a given imperial territory are only part of the story. From another perspective, the political, economic, social, and cultural *legacies* of the post-colonial world are the more important objects of study and critique. And although the aftermaths of decolonization are usually observed in terms of their impact on the formerly colonized, the changes wrought by decolonization in the metropoles of imperial powers have recently come under scrutiny too. Another consequence of decolonization, ironically, has been not simply the separation of the imperial power from the emergent nation-state, but also new forms of integration and control, sometimes referred to as "neo-colonialism."

Claiming that decolonization was a partial and multi-layered process, comprising different elements, causes and consequences, still requires us to situate the phenomenon in time and space. Loosely understood as resistance to imperial dominion over a given territory and people, resulting in the achievement of some alternative form of rule, decolonization might be said to have a lifespan stretching back to the ancient world. In the early modern and modern periods, we might view the American Revolution through the lens of decolonization. Likewise, the end of the Spanish empire in Latin America saw the birth of many new nation-states. The dissolution of the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires after World War I is also a significant moment in the history of decolonization. However, one of the things that distinguishes these episodes from the later decolonization of the European overseas empires is that they did not kill off the idea that empires were legitimate political units.

Having fought a revolutionary war against British control, the United States extended its territory to the western seaboard, frequently subjugating, displacing, or simply killing the native inhabitants it came across. The

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mid-to-late 19th century saw the massive expansion of European empires across Asia and Africa, sometimes at the barrel of a gun, sometimes at the stroke of a pen. Russia and Great Britain vied for the spoils of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rising powers such as Japan had their own imperial aspirations. Following World War I, Woodrow Wilson seemed to personify hopes for a new era of "national self-determination" and equality between states. This moment was both fleeting and Eurocentric. There was no racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations, as Japanese delegates at Versailles had proposed. The territorial scope of the main European empires grew larger. Britain and France were given new "mandates" to rule in the Middle East and Africa. The age of empire was far from over.

Still, this denial of equality had an impact on the development of nationalism in the colonial world; in Egypt, India, China, and elsewhere (Manela 2007). After 1918 national self-determination became more commonly debated. In India, British legitimacy had been undermined by the atrocity of the Amritsar Massacre of April 1919, though pressure for reform had been building for some time. The interwar period saw the reconfiguration of Britain's relationship with its largely self-governing "dominions," Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Control of both foreign policy and internal affairs was legally recognized by the 1931 Statute of Westminster. It is worth noting, however, that for the indigenous peoples of those settler colonies "decolonization" came much later. Leaving South Africa aside, the First Nations of Canada, for example, only acquired citizenship in 1961. The interwar changes that did occur were largely responses to political pressure from the periphery of empire, though they involved calculated concessions at the center. Conversely, Ireland – the colonial status of which was and remains debatable – made a partially successful bid for independence through armed insurrection between 1919 and 1921. Egypt too gained partial independence in 1922 following civil unrest and nationalist agitation.

However, if some momentum towards decolonization had begun after World War I it was limited, sporadic, and uneven. Colonized peoples from around the world still showed astonishing loyalty, and died in very large numbers fighting another European war on behalf of the colonial powers from 1939. After World War II, significant territories achieved formal independence in Southeast Asia and South Asia. But even then, for a decade or more European powers made a substantial bid to rehabilitate empires and strengthen control over colonized peoples, militarily in Asia, and through a mixture of "colonial development," political reform, and state repression in Africa. The term "decolonization" – although coined in the 19th century – was hardly used until after about 1960. The fact that a historical process is not given a label certainly does not mean it is not happening. However, it does perhaps suggest a lack of awareness in the minds of Europeans about their imminent loss of power.

Decolonization of the European overseas empires came late and was rapidly concluded. In 1945 the United Nations (UN) had 51 original members. By 1955 that number had risen to 76, with only seven of the new members formerly colonized. Yet by 1965, membership has risen to 117 countries, the vast majority of these new nation-states being created through decolonization, which had accelerated rapidly after the independence of Ghana and Malaya in 1957. Anti-colonialists contributed greatly to this development, which was given institutional and legal meaning by way of independence as sovereign membership of the UN. Each moment of independence was an

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exemplar, and contributed cumulatively to the accelerating process of change. Flag independence in Asia and Africa was not the end of decolonization as a practical or intellectual problem. It was, however, the manifestation of a profound reshaping of the international system and its normative architecture after 1945. This may constitute the most significant aspect of decolonization as a process of historical change.

If imperial ideology lived on well after 1918 – and in regard to Africa well after 1945 – the dissolution of the European seaborne imperial systems in Asia and Africa that followed World War II eventually rendered virtually obsolete the idea of empire as an object of value. There are certainly other examples of declining or disbanded empires. New nation-states were born elsewhere and at other times. However, with the eventual decolonization of the European empires we witness, for the first time in human history, not just the fall of empires but the complete undermining of the very idea of empire itself. This explains the relatively short timeframe and delineated geographical scope of most of what follows.

TOWARDS A WORLD OF NATION-STATES

Perhaps the key principle underpinning 20th-century decolonization was that of nationhood or national self-determination. Simply put, colonized peoples ought to be able to "self-define" how they are governed, and "nation" was the proper unit into which people should be organized. "Nationhood" was the goal, and "nationalism" the political expression of the claim that nation and sovereign borders should be congruent (Gellner 1983). If independence was usually granted on the basis of existing imperial territorial divisions, and declarations from imperial powers and nationalist elites over the heads of their people, the abstract idea of nationhood still became – with some interesting if largely overlooked attempts to resist this trend – a near universal value. This was a tremendously powerful solvent of modern empires.

Earlier in the century, Britain and its allies had claimed to be resisting German aggression during World War I in defense of the rights of "small nations." After the war, despite Wilson's rhetoric, the European imperial powers still conceived of any right to membership of the "international community" as a qualified one, based on assumptions about history and culture that placed European or "western" nation-states in a superior category. Having declined to join the League of Nations in 1920, it appeared that the United States did not feel strongly enough to argue. But by 1941 the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter, followed by the 1945 United Nations Charter, "self-government" was promoted, though in a somewhat ambiguous fashion. Much of the explanation for this change can be found in the widely held belief that the old international system was at least partly responsible for a second world war in a generation. The mistakes of 1919 could not be repeated. From an American perspective, imperialism had to be ended, and nationalism regulated. The United Nations' 1948 "Universal Declaration" went further, asserting universal "human right" to a nationality (United Nations 1948). Even if "nation" was hard to define, its political potency as the antidote to "empire" was growing.

Principles of national self-determination and nationhood drew upon secondary concepts, which also made a significant contribution to the modern idea of decolonization. Calls for decolonization were often connected to "popular" participation and "democratic" governance. The popular dimension of anti-colonial resistance movements rarely resulted

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in a genuinely unified front. Decolonizing societies were complex and nationalists' claims to speak "for the people" frequently masked internal dissent. Nonetheless, ideals of democratic or popular participation provided legitimation. These new nations, expressing some form of popular will, also had to possess "sovereignty" –absolute control over a designated and internationally recognized territory. Above all, perhaps, sovereignty was an assertion of equal status with other nations in the world, and the right not to be interfered with by external forces. In addition, anti-colonial nationalists often professed the objective of "modernization," to materially improve the condition of the people they represented. Accordingly, insofar as decolonization is intimately tied to ideas of national self-determination, nationhood, popular or democratic will, sovereignty, and eventually modernization, the relatively recent nature of this process is reiterated. The journey towards full-scale nationalist calls for independence was a convoluted one, involving many proposals and counter-proposals for reform. For many colonial peoples, nationalism – properly defined – did not really take off until after World War II.

The war hastened processes of decolonization that were partially underway, but it had a transformative impact on all colonial regimes. This was in part due to the "overstretch" of imperial powers, and the large debts incurred fighting the war. But this was not a simple question of decision making at the center. Rising nationalist powers, particularly in Asia, were able to seize the initiative and economics alone does not explain why. In East Asia, colonial territories had already been forcefully taken by Japan. This had a very significant bearing on French and Dutch efforts to stymie Asian decolonization. Nationalists were already engaged in armed struggle, state control had been undermined, and the influence of communist China was considerable.

Britain maintained a degree of order in India in the face of the 1942 "Quit India" campaign by imprisoning most of the nationalist leadership. Bengal saw a famine of terrible proportions in 1943–1944. Despite political repression and economic dislocation, by 1945 the British Indian Army had become the largest volunteer army the world had ever seen, with some 2.5 million men playing decisive roles in fighting Axis powers across the globe. Even so, India was a special case, already well on the road to independence before the war. Interwar economic benefits of the "Raj" were no longer as compelling for Britain as the costs – actual and potential – of seeking to enforce control of so large and so restive a territory. Independence was granted in 1947, with Pakistan simultaneously created by the partition of the old imperial structure. In 1948 Ceylon (Sri Lanka from 1972) and Burma also became independent. The British clung to a "fortress empire" in Singapore and were unable to disengage in Malaysia due to a combination of internal conflict in the territory and the spread of communism.

In Indochina (modern day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) France could only contemplate a restoration of its power with the acquiescence of Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang. But Ho Chi Minh's communist-backed Vietnam declared independence in September 1945, and by 1954 the French had fought a nearly ten-year war resulting in huge military losses and a decisive defeat at the Battle of Dien Ben Phu. France's formal imperialism in Asia was dead, and the Cold War firmly entrenched in the region. The independence of Indonesia in 1949 was preceded by Dutch attempts to reconquer the archipelago forcibly, but with fewer men and less money, and ultimately a seemingly weaker determination than the French exhibited in Indochina.

So, after World War II, nationalist assertiveness – through political means in India

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and military means in Indochina and Indonesia – shaped calculations by politicians and military chiefs in the metropole about the costs and benefits of maintaining formal empire. Elsewhere in the colonial world, coercive efforts to mobilize men and material for the war effort provoked resistance and unrest in colonial territories. As with the previous war, the many colonial soldiers who fought in World War II came back with a renewed, if inchoate, sense that things should change. However, the war certainly did not precipitate a wholesale abandonment of empire. Far from there being a freefall towards decolonization, empire can even be seen to have undergone a revival of sorts. Whilst Europeans withdrew from Asia, so the Middle East and principally sub-Saharan Africa became the new objects of focus.

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLONIAL VIOLENCE

Although Britain was effectively forced into an inelegant abandonment of its Palestine mandate in 1948, both Britain and France maintained a strong degree of informal control in other parts of the region and frequently intervened to support client regimes and obstruct apparently hostile powers, as with the Anglo-French-Israeli Suez debacle of 1956 in which Abdel Nasser played a leading role. In Africa, having mooted though failed to agree a union of the French and British empires in the later 1940s, each power sought new ways to reconfigure the terms of collaboration with local power-brokers. Federations were implemented in French West Africa and in British central and southern Africa. New attempts at development were underway. The deployment of more colonial administrators in Africa after 1945 has even been referred to as a "second colonial occupation" (Low and Lonsdale 1976). Heavily indebted Britain and France saw their empires as routes to renewed prosperity, with the commodities they could extract fetching high prices on the world market. With an equally damaged Belgium continuing its coercive and extractive practices in the Congo until independence in 1960, and Lusophone Africa being the last empire to decolonize, as late as 1975, metropolitan weakness after World War II does not easily explain the timing of decolonization.

Ironically, the uneven process of change – in which imperial powers redoubled their efforts to develop their empires in the name of progress – may have hastened their demise. Africans were not simply the passive recipients of technocratic plans for reform of labor and society, but rather responded to and shaped these policies through resistance and participation (Cooper 1996). Thinking in terms of modernization undermined old ideas about how to govern the empire. "Indirect rule," where stable tribal societies would be pacified by deference to their local leadership, who themselves collaborated with the imperial power in return for patronage, no longer applied. French and British colonial administrators saw Africans as "detribalizing" and urbanizing.

These socioeconomic changes altered the terms of collaboration between imperial powers and their clients at the periphery. Nationalist leaders emerged from or co-opted labor movements, which made the abstract idea of a "nationalist struggle" tangible as a promised improvement in living standards. At the same time, questions of access to work or land sometimes deepened social cleavages around ethnic group or tribe, generating instability. Kenya's "Mau Mau" rebellion in the 1950s became one the most notorious colonial counter-insurgencies on account of British attempts to cover up the full extent of its brutal suppression, in which potentially up to 20,000 Kenyans died (Anderson 2005).

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But Mau Mau was not simply a nationalist revolt against the British. It was also an inter- and intra-communal conflict, a struggle between generations, and over land ownership. The rebellion shaped Kenya's post-colonial politics for years to come. It also made it prohibitively expensive for Britain to maintain Kenya as a colonial dependency.

The complexity of Kenya's colonial politics was compounded by the fact that it had a large European settler population, as well as significant migration from the Indian subcontinent. Settler colonialism was the basis of England's earliest expansion, first in North America, later in the Pacific, and then in Africa. By the mid-20th century South Africa, Southern and Northern Rhodesia, and Kenya posed acute problems for the British. Massively outnumbered by the indigenous African population, white settlers viewed the prospects of national independence and an equal franchise with great apprehension. As a result, Kenya gained its independence (1964) later than its less economically and socially "advanced" neighbor, Uganda (1962).

South Africa elected a racialist apartheid National Government in 1948 and left the British Commonwealth in 1961, only becoming a full democracy, and hence moving beyond its colonial political condition, in 1994. Southern Rhodesia rejected majority rule and in 1965 made an infamous Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). The Declaration came at 11a.m. on November 11, World War I Armistice Day. Reminding the "mother country" of Rhodesia's sacrifices for Crown and Empire during the two world wars, the Declaration ended with a resounding "God Save the Queen." The British position embodied a profound irony. Those who had carried forward the seed of empire –who had literally built it with their own hands – were now, by resisting decolonization, betraying the supposed ideals of British liberalism, thereby revealing the paradox of "liberal empire."

France's problems with settler colonialism during decolonization were even more serious. By 1940, the highpoint of the French settler population in Indochina numbered only about 34,000. The war there was fought for different reasons. But in June 1960, Algerians of European descent numbered over one million. Algeria was conquered militarily in 1830 and from 1848 was administered as an integral part of France. Settlement and incorporation meant France was very reluctant to allow Algerian independence. Following World War II, many indigenous Muslim Algerians protested the discriminatory policies that the French implemented in Algeria, such as the racial franchise. In Serif in May 1945, Muslim Algerian protestors rioted and killed an estimated 100 settlers. In retribution, soldiers under French control massacred at least 6000 local inhabitants by summary execution, aerial bombing from aircraft, and shelling from gunships off the coast. The Sétif Massacre spurred the radicalization of Algerian nationalism and its move towards revolutionary armed resistance (Evans 2012).

Because of the settler dimension, the Algerian War of Independence had a greater political impact in the metropole than the one in Indochina. Between November 1954 and March 1962, the war cost the lives of more than 250,000 people, mostly Algerian. It brought down France's Fourth Republic and returned General Charles de Gaulle to power in 1958. The loss of Algeria represented a crushing blow to France's long-term dream of an assimilationist empire. Whilst the hypocrisy of Britain's liberalism was laid bare by Mau Mau and the settler colonists who opposed democracy, France's pretensions to equality and inclusiveness were unmasked by its massacring of its colonial population in order to ostensibly keep it "free."

Violence and disorder certainly raised the cost of maintaining empire and resisting

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decolonization. It also revealed the hypocrisy of empire's new civilizing mission after 1945. The brutality of colonial violence sometimes provoked nationalists to push more forcefully for independence, as in the Algerian case. But modern empire was marked by violence from the very beginning. Moreover, the use of force by colonial powers ebbed and flowed according to circumstances and did not necessarily provoke immediate further rebellion. The development of repressive regimes was particularly noticeable in the interwar period as colonial powers sought to coerce and bring into line defiant workers and trade union organizations that might have threatened already embattled metropolitan economies. For example, the 1934–1939 labor riots in the Caribbean, notably in Jamaica, were aggressively policed and put down, with a high degree of violence on both sides.

Yet although the beginnings of the Jamaican party system followed, and nationalism gained a foothold, Jamaica exhibited a high degree of loyalism towards Britain during World War II and even after, not gaining its independence until 1962. In short, colonial violence often gave impetus to decolonization, but under specific local circumstances. Those conditions were more complex where the imperial power relied on settlers to administer its territory. What is clear is that the violent repression of anti-colonial nationalism – with Algeria and Kenya standing out as perhaps the most egregious examples – undermines the idea of a planned and uncontentious "transfer of power," a self-congratulatory narrative that was favored, particularly by the British, well into the 1980s.

THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

Even so, the idea of a transfer of power is not entirely irrelevant to our understanding of decolonization. For all the violence, oppression, resistance, and nationalist political agency, the speed of change between 1957 and 1965 arguably overshadows the explanatory capacity of all analytical factors that can be seen as causes of decolonization. To make sense of this extraordinary development, we need to return to the aforementioned normative force of the nation-state. It provided a ready receptacle into which all anti-colonial grievances and aspirations could be channeled, and just as crucially a political exit route for colonial powers themselves. Here, changes at the level of ideas in the international sphere were critical. When British prime minister Harold Macmillan stood before the Cape Town parliament in 1960 and said that the "wind of change" was blowing through the continent of Africa, he claimed that the growth of national consciousness was now a "political fact." This was no great insight on Macmillan's part, but his rhetoric came to pass as shorthand for something more profound. In the previous decade it had not always seemed that nation-states must be the natural successors to empires. Still, most of the great nationalist leaders and intellectuals of the modern world from Garibaldi through Nehru, Chiang Kai-shek, Sukarno, Nkrumah, to Eric Williams, accepted the framework of the modern nation-state with its sovereign territoriality and claims to modernization. The dissenting voices were fewer. M. K. Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore stand out as two critics of the nation-state, though ultimately Gandhi accepted nationalist politics as a necessary evil. Tagore fundamentally rejected the logic of modern nationalism, though he failed to propose concrete alternatives for the post-colonial polity (Collins 2012). After 1945, there was more interest in alternatives to the nation than is commonly recognized. Proposals for federation were made not only by imperialists seeking to delay independence, but also by putative "nationalists"– Léopold

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Senghor in French West Africa and Julius Nyerere in British East Africa among them – who were skeptical about the coming epoch. Ultimately, alternatives failed to materialize or were short-lived. We need to understand why that was so.

The Cold War revealed the eclipse of the former European "Great Powers," though Britain and France remained useful for the United States as bulwarks against the spread of communism. But arguably the more important intellectual developments in the international sphere pre-date the material fact of the Cold War. During World War II and in the years immediately after, political leaders and thinkers from around the world forged a new consensus around a form of liberal internationalism, supporting the idea of a new international order of sovereign nation-states, one in which empire had no place at all. The huge political investment made by the United States in this vision of a New World – liberal, capitalist, freely associated sovereign states – was decisive. But its intellectual development did not only spring from "Western" sources, it came from the "Global South" too. Jawaharlal Nehru brilliantly exploited the platforms afforded by both the United Nations and the British Commonwealth of Nations to advance the position of India in world affairs, frequently censuring South Africa for its apartheid policies after 1948 from a position of moral universalism. The 1955 Bandung Conference was an important moment in which newly and soon-to-be independent states voiced their moral outrage to colonialism in all its forms. Despite the plurality of voices, Bandung can perhaps be seen not so much as "non-aligned" as in fact allied to ideas of liberal internationalism, thereby legitimizing the decolonizing world's claims to equality. The December 1960 *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* effectively nailed the coffin of European claims to the moral force of empire. "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation," the resolution stated, "constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation" (United Nations 1960). Although they officially abstained, the Cold War made acceptance of this argument on the part of the United Sates and the European powers all the more urgent, lest resistance encourage anti-colonialists to fall into the Soviet camp. Last but not least, the ravages of Fascism meant that post-war Europe had to be rebuilt on stronger democratic foundations. Anti-colonialism in Europe linked political change in the metropole to decolonization (Howe 1993). Europeans were being forced by weight of argument to live up to their own supposed belief in "majority rule" and accept the democratic impulse of nationalism in the colonial world.

The nation-state and subsequent membership in the international community thus provided an end goal for nationalist leaders. Political pressure for decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s did not involve an agreed idea of the nation, but rather competing positions that had to be forged into some kind of coalition against colonial power. Nonetheless, conflicts over identity and resources at the level of the colony could either be suppressed or postponed in an attempt to seize state power and claim self-determination as legal sovereignty and nationhood. The existence of an institutional successor to empire narrowed the options for metropolitan decision makers and raised the costs of resisting decolonization further. The international context might therefore be the conjuncture at which the agency of anti-colonialism met with materially and intellectually weakened imperial power at the center. If so, this helps us to understand the avalanche of independence declarations in the 1960s. The many forces pushing for

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decolonization were channeled into a singular outcome: the universalization of the nation-state. This moment therefore stands as the pivot between the causes of decolonization and its consequences, legacies, and continuities.

THE LATE COLONIAL AND THE POST-COLONIAL STATE

Nations have been referred to as "imagined communities." Even in the very smallest of them, one would never know all members of a national group. The public sphere and the media thus become crucial in facilitating communication and a group identity. The discursive construction of the "nation" helped to delineate the relationship between sovereignty, territory, and population, and gave a legal personality to collective groups in the international system. Therefore the consequences for colonial people of being incorporated into new nation-states were often very concrete. In many cases the territorial borders defining these new nations were based upon the arbitrary whims of former colonial powers. Under empires, colonized peoples often found themselves cut off from historical kinship ties, or forced to show loyalty to new ones. Decolonization sometimes entrenched the resultant tensions, leading to post-colonial conflict. And whereas early post-colonial nationalists were keen to champion the efforts they and their predecessors had made at nation-building, it became quickly and painfully apparent to some that the post-colonial state was heavily derivative of the colonial one, that the nation-states that had been fought for and claimed lacked both coherence and legitimacy.

The late colonial and post-colonial state in Africa has been termed a "gatekeeper state," standing astride and between the outside world and the colonial territory, relatively weak in terms of control over society and culture (Cooper 2002). The gatekeeper state overlaps with the idea of weak sovereignty and highlights the ways in which nationalist elites interacted with external bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations, and bilateral international development organizations. The newly acquired legal sovereignty of the decolonized nation-state gave many post-colonial states a place in, and direct relationship with, these new international institutions. This connected post-colonial elites to networks of ideas and policy proposals that they were not always able to fully consider in light of their domestic population's demands, nor in terms of feasibility.

Others have preferred to focus on the coercive and divisive nature of the colonial state and its legacy for the post-colonial nation-state. Arbitrary power, forced labor, and ethnically organized resistance to state power were continuities between the colonial and post-colonial periods which undermined the chances of decolonization leading to successful democratic development (Mamdani 1996). In a similar vein, the post-colonial state has been characterized as "overdeveloped" in the area of law and order – military, police, and prisons – but fragile in many areas of governance such as the legislature and courts.

NEO-COLONIALISM

Analysis of the post-colonial state is clearly linked to the perceived failures of decolonization to deliver the freedom, equality and improvement in people's lives that nationalists had promised. "Neo-colonialism" – which in 1965 Kwame Nkrumah called "the last stage of imperialism" – has been an important way of explaining this problem. Here, it is important to remember that imperialism as a form of power did not always have to be "formal," but could involve various

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"informal" ways of obtaining acquiescence: neo-colonialism suggests that the idea of informal control is equally important in the post-colonial period.

Economically, the continuing control of former colonial powers over newly independent states was apparent in monetary structures such as Britain's sterling zone and France's *Zone Franc*. Independence did not resolve the problem of dependency on capital and business investment from the former imperial power, or from other "western" sources ideologically aligned with it. For example, after the rapid and troubled decolonization of the Belgian Congo, it is estimated that about 70 percent of the Congolese economy continued to be controlled by Belgium, primarily through the major multinational corporation Société Générale de Belgique.

A more general but powerful critique of the world economy after empire has been that of "dependency theory." This entails a broadly Marxist long-term historical perspective in which decolonization only forms a later part, stressing continuities from the period of empire to the so-called era of independence in terms of the integration of the world economy. Specifically, dependency theory posits a core–periphery model in which the manner of the periphery's integration into the world economy determines its level of "under-development." The argument runs that either formal or informal colonization of the periphery facilitated extractive practices in which resources – labor and raw materials – were utilized for the benefit of the core economies, usually to produce manufactures for sale on the world market that maximized surplus value.

The explanatory value of dependency theory arguably diminished in the later 20th century as the credibility of Marxist historical and economic analysis came under a more general attack. But at the same time – and into the early 21st century, the idea of dependency has broadened to include the alleged imposition of neo-liberal economic models on poorer countries by the World Bank and the IMF through "structural adjustment policies." The power of multinational corporations to influence politics in developing, post-colonial states remains part of this overall picture. Most recently, the Chinese state has been criticized for its approach to development assistance, particularly in Africa, which has sometimes involved the acquisition of large tracts of land in return for investment in infrastructure.

Politically, the most frequently cited example of more-or-less overt neo-colonial control of formerly colonized territories is that of *Francafrique*. The French politician Jacques Foccart, who served as a chief adviser for African affairs under both De Gaulle and Pompidou, came to embody the mixture of geopolitical, business, and military interventions that marked France's role in West Africa long after formal decolonization. Political intervention in post-colonial states was also bound up with the Cold War. The pursuit of power by other means than formal empire – what has been called the "imperialism of decolonization" (Louis and Robinson 1994) – meant that both the United States and Soviet Russia intervened frequently and widely to prop up or undermine different powers according to their interests, with the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia all being prominent arenas of competition. The Middle East too saw the Cold War having a significant impact. France, Britain, and the United States sought to extend neo-colonial or "informal" control in that region, often through military alliances and cooperation with supposedly friendly rulers, frequently with disastrous consequences.

More transparent, but to some minds equally guilty of neo-colonial intent, were the formal post-colonial international organizations such as the British Commonwealth of Nations and the *Communauté Française*. The

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British Commonwealth (now Commonwealth of Nations) was originally formed out of the colonies of white settlement, with India and Pakistan becoming its first "non-white" members. These so-called "New Commonwealth" countries, above all India, utilized the Commonwealth from the outset – as they did the United Nations – to push forward ideas about decolonization and human rights. Yet although it is a forum in which "western" liberal values about democracy, human rights, and market economics are promoted, the extent to which it can be said to be dominated by Britain is dubious.

POSTCOLONIALISM

If the primary approach to neo-colonialism has been via economics and politics, another important consequence of decolonization has been the advent of "postcolonialism" as a philosophical critique emphasizing the intellectual and cultural legacies of empire.

Although he died in 1961 at the age of just 36, the Martiniquan psychiatrist and writer Franz Fanon – heavily influenced by events in Algeria and a revolutionary strain of Marxism – had a significant posthumous influence. Fanon distinguished between what he called "true and false decolonization," recommending a violent purging of the colonial presence in all its forms. He is considered a progenitor of postcolonialism, though his attitude towards violence often stands in contrast to those who claim him as an inspiration. The idea of incomplete decolonization was advanced into the realm of culture and ideas by the theorist and critic Edward Said. His seminal 1978 *Orientalism* argued that the colonizer's power to create knowledge about the colonized was central to the practice of empire. By implication, if the very concepts and categories through which non-European people comprehended the world had been colonized by European modes of thought, decolonization required more than just a change of government. Power was exercised through "discourse," that is self-sustaining structures of words and concepts. Western discourses about the non-West were in fact a method of control and oppression. If core epistemological assumptions regarding culture, class, subjectivity, history, and knowledge remained colonized, then postcolonialism demanded the "decolonization of representation" itself (Scott 1999). From an African perspective, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's 1986 *Decolonising the Mind* captured this insight very well.

Postcolonialism took analysis of the legacies of decolonization to another level of ideological critique. Because it drew upon some of the key intellectual developments of the later 20th century – which we might loosely call "postmodernism" – it resonated widely with a general anti-empiricist trend in history and the social sciences. It claimed to offer a better understanding of how language and identity shaped human experience. Even so, for some observers the insistence on the primacy of culture and language has obscured the more "traditional" categories of state, politics, and economy, and hence the material – as distinct from the "discursive" – aspects of power with which the earlier neo-colonialist approach was most concerned. Material inequality appears more central than ever to global injustice in the 21st century. Equally, the "status quo" is often justified or explained away through discourse. The challenge may therefore be to work towards a productive combination of the theoretical insights of postcolonialism and the focus on the more material aspects of oppression that remain all too evident today.

"BRINGING THE EMPIRE HOME"

As had been argued as long ago as the 1980s, furthered by the advent of postcolonialism,

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the practice of empire was mutually constitutive, shaping the colonizer as well as the colonized (MacKenzie 1984). Whilst we may not be inclined to feel sorry for former colonial powers, by implication losing an empire must also have had an impact in the metropole, and potentially a disruptive one too. Historians of decolonization have therefore recently turned their attention to the possible consequences of decolonization – culturally, but also economically and politically – in metropolitan societies. It has sometimes been implied that imperial powers such as Britain, which famously purported to have "conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind," also decolonized their empire without really noticing. In response, it has been persuasively suggested that decolonization in fact led to a series of shocks that resonated widely in the metropole, not least in the realm of popular culture (Ward 2001). French amnesia about decolonization has been equally pronounced, and only very recently have historians begun to address the myriad ways in which decolonization led to serious ruptures in the French worldview (Shepard 2006). In fact the debate about decolonization in France may come to be seen as bound up with Nazi collaboration during the Vichy period.

The "trauma of decolonization," to borrow Arend Lijphart's evocative phrase from the 1960s, was not just connected to politics and culture, but also saw major changes to metropolitan economies. Despite the neo-colonial economic thesis, many former imperial powers' economies were reoriented towards western trading partners. The advent of the European Economic Community (EEC) saw large shifts in world trade. The EEC also led to problems of national identity. General de Gaulle famously vetoed British entry into the EEC in 1963 because, so he claimed, Britain was not really a European country, but one still connected economically and indeed culturally to its former empire and now Commonwealth. The painful irony of this position – given France's obvious post-colonial attachments and involvements in its former empire – was not lost on the British.

For those early members of the EEC such as France, Holland, and Belgium, rapid growth rates, albeit from a low base due to the degradation of World War II, may have ameliorated decolonization's economic shock in the metropole. Britain, however, became somewhat obsessed in the 1960s and 1970s by theories of "decline." Whether that decline was absolute or relative, the notion of "declinism" – that is to say an almost ideological belief in the terminal downward trajectory of Britain's supposedly ailing industries and sclerotic political institutions – even took hold. Various explanations competed to establish the role of empire in this fall from greatness – industrial protectionism, the over-valued pound sterling, the pernicious over-reliance on the City of London – in engendering such a dismal post-colonial situation for the United Kingdom.

Thatcherism, despite its deep recourse to patriotism, played heavily on these anxieties, and the idea of post-colonial "decline" helped to justify "neo-liberal" reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. Ironically, the actual extent of Britain's alleged decline may well have been overplayed. This begs the question of whether, over the longer term, shedding formal empire may have ultimately strengthened, not weakened former imperial powers. If one accepts the idea, as has been argued for the case of Britain, that recourse to formal political control was usually only made where informal means of securing trade and military allegiance was insufficient – that British imperialism was really about a system of commerce and exchange rather than actual territorial conquest – then the problem of neo-colonialism and the maintenance of power by other means takes on another dimension (Darwin 2009).

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One element of decolonization that has led to widespread national soul-searching, or what the sociologist Paul Gilroy has referred to as "postcolonial melancholia," is the inward migration to metropolitan societies of large numbers of formerly colonized peoples. Due to immigration from former colonies, Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium – and partially but less so Portugal – are now "multicultural" societies. Attempts to recognize that difference, or to assimilate and eradicate it, mark out alternate approaches in each country. However, what they all have in common is the strong sense that the actual physical presence of "racial" and cultural difference in the metropole has profoundly disrupted the old colonial binaries of "self" and "other," European and non-European, upon which the domination of one group by another rested.

The growing population of so-called "mixed race" people in Western Europe is perhaps a physical, material manifestation of the failure of that policy. To paraphrase Kipling, "the twain" have indeed met, and frequently too. The question of population is far from incidental: Western Europe's aging citizenry cannot indefinitely support the generous welfare and pension schemes put in place after World War II. That Europe will become increasingly dependent on migrant labor is almost incontestable. If the cultural and political problems provoked by immigration can be overcome within the framework of a liberal society, then this may yet be just one more area in which decolonization is Europe's gain, as it sucks in youthful and talented people from outside its borders.

DECOLONIZATION AS GLOBALIZATION

The issue of migration is suggestive of the fact that decolonization may have been a force for integration and connection in the broadest sense. One of the most prominent characteristics of the 20th-century world is the increasing connectedness and similarities of practice we see between Europe and North America and what used to be called the Third World. This is not necessarily to advance a neo-colonial, or even a simplistic "end of history" thesis. Yet post-1945 decolonization can be seen as part of the longer-term changes taking place in world history from the mid-19th century onwards, as a complex extension of the history of empire.

Decolonization had multiple and intersecting causes as well as consequences. It constituted perhaps the single most significant and rapid transformation of world politics, yet it involved considerable elements of continuity too. Anti-colonial nationalism itself was, in the words of one very powerful critic, a "derivative discourse" (Chatterjee 1986). Even allowing for great local variation, the basic contours of political community and economic organization that emerged in modern Europe were mostly replicated in the decolonizing world. Control of a bureaucratic apparatus, the state's monopoly of violence coupled with control of a given territory's natural resources, population and economic exchange – all legitimized by a form of governance that was ostensibly popular or democratic, and framed by a national identity – were *theoretically* the defining features of the postcolonial state. They remain the benchmarks by which success, failure, and even new orientations are contested.

In this sense we might view decolonization as part of a long-term process of globalization: the diffusion and dissemination of European norms and practices. Whether this is a good or bad thing depends very much on one's political persuasions. But, even from radically different standpoints, ongoing influences in the realms of economy, society, politics, and culture that find their origins in empire render decolonization a far from complete process.

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